

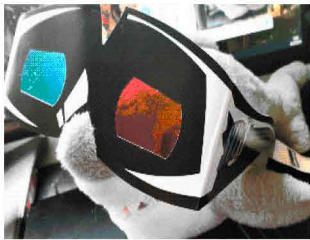
ISSUE TWO

Escaflowne? Final Fantasy!
Spotlight on DOS Shareware
R-Type on Mega Drive!
... and more!

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SCANLINES



Hello and welcome to the second issue of Between the Scanlines!

Firstly, thank you all for the warm reception given to the first issue. By my estimation, several hundred of you downloaded and read SCANLINES, which I'm extremely grateful for. It's very much a passion project and so, to see it being shared and praised has meant an awful lot to me.

So yeah, issue two is here and again we've got some community involvement - and more on the way in future issues. One nice thing about aiming to do a fortnightly release schedule is that I can include relatively current news and developments - such as the new MEGA R-TYPE fan port for Sega Mega Drive that is still pretty hot off the press.

SCANLINES will continue to develop and unfold as we experiment with page counts, template designs - and based on your feedback, which I'm always very happy to receive. I'm also keen for additional community submissions, so if there's something you'd like to see published in SCANLINES, please reach out!

You can contact me via @SharkaBytes on Twitter/X, Mastodon, and Bluesky, or you can drop me a line at curicuricreations@protonmail.com.

Enjoy!

Sasha McAuliffe, Editor.

Contents, Attributions, and Special Thanks

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Front cover image taken from 'Carnage Bubblegum Crisis AGA' PD disk.
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BITS 'n' BYTES - MEGA R-TYPE (MD/GEN)



Watch out all other home ports of R-Type! There's a new kid in town!

MEGA R-TYPE launched in demo form to do battle with the Bydo Empire just over a week ago. This fan port to SEGA's 16-bit wonder is the passionate work of Andrea Baldiraghi, aka @TheRoboZ. And hoo boy, is it a wonder to behold.

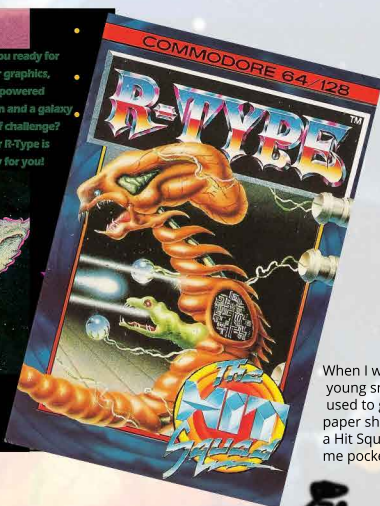
Like me, you might have grown up with one of the various home versions of R-Type, all of which did their best to capture the arcade original's look and feel - with various degrees of success. MEGA R-Type will truly make you feel like you are playing the arcade game - with some extra and welcome bells and whistles, least of all the MEGA REMIX SOUNDTRACK.

There are a suite of options to tinker with, from ship type and respawn points to reduced challenge mode that gives you infinite lives and invulnerability to projectiles - but not with the walls. Shmups are a wonderful spectacle to behold, so I definitely welcome a mode where it's easier to experience all that the game has to offer!

And even in three-stage demo form, R-TYPE offers a hearty wedge of gameplay and definitely impresses. The MEGA Remix is great, using the MD's soundchip effectively to put out some bangin' tunes, and the scrolling is butter smooth with a vibrant palette for all the sprites.

Download the demo at:
<https://theroboz.itch.io/mega-r-type>

BATTLE OF THE BOXES



When I were a young snake, I used to go down the paper shop and pick up a Hit Squad game with me pocket money

Cor, look at the lips on that sexy beast

Esssssscaaafloooowne... Anyone who has watched Sunrise's *The Vision of Escalowne* already has the choral chanting in their head. It's one of the signature pieces of audio in this, quite possibly my favourite anime series of all time.

I've long been a fan of anime, first getting into it in the mid-90s. Back then, it was a rare and mysterious thing, often mischaracterized as being all 'violent porn cartoons'. But it's easy to understand why, given the focus on hyper-violent series' such as *Ninja Scroll* and *Fist of the North Star*, which would often be front-and-centre in Manga UK ads and what would be shown very late at night.

Amid this sea of exploding heads and geysers of blood, you had *Escaflowne*.

I often call *Escaflowne* the best Final Fantasy series - and it really is. It has all the signature plot beats. An oppressive empire with more advanced technology than everyone else? Check. Hot bishonen guys with long hair? Check! Catgirls? Politics? Personal drama? Love? Quadruple check! You can watch *Escaflowne* and start checking off everything you'd see in a classic FF game - especially FF6.

Escaflowne is also what we'd call these days an *isekai*. The series protagonist, Hitomi Kanzaki is teleported to another world, Gaea, where the Earth, our Earth, hangs in the sky. Gaea is a world of high fantasy and clockpunk technology - and mecha. Imagine if Leonardo Da Vinci had designed Gundam suits, that's pretty much what the signature piloted 'robot' of the series looks like, all elegant armour and gears and pulleys.

As Hitomi adjusts to her new life in Gaea, she'll meet a colourful cast of characters, from serious co-protagonist Van and annoying catgirl mascot Merl to dashing bishie swordsman Alan Shezar. Ah, Van. Some of you may be familiar with *Escaflowne* through its infamous Fox Kids broadcast, where they applied a buzzsaw to the episodes and messily re-edited them so that the show had a more shonen action vibe and *Van* was the protagonist - not Hitomi.

In its original unbutchered form, *Escaflowne* is a shojo series, blending themes of love and romance with world-building politics and action. And there is *plenty* of well-animated action. All of it expertly scored by Yoko Kanno and the Warsaw Philharmonic Orchestra. *Escaflowne*'s soundtrack is absolutely stunning and worth the price of admission alone. Its art style has a very mid-90s look with a sketchy roughness that I dig, but the noses, oh the noses. Why so pointy?

Escaflowne's story spans 26 episodes for the TV series, which forms part of a small multimedia empire. Not only are there three manga iterations of its core concepts, two of them radically different interpretations, there is also a movie that again is another wildly different retelling of *Escaflowne*'s story, darker and edgier and with biopunk and horror aspects. There is also a Japan-exclusive video game.

The Vision of Escaflowne is a magnificent series - and a must-see for fans of JRPGs. There's pretty much something for everyone, whether you be a fan of shojo romance, fantasy mecha, political intrigue, or of worldbuilding. And there are some real surprises and plot-twists to keep you on your toes every step of the way.





COMMUNITY SQUARE

THE SHAREWARE QUEEN



Hoot-hoot! The Scanlines Express pulls up at Community Square where a special guest awaits us: Amy! Aka @AmyFluidGoth. I've known Amy for a good while now through Twitter/X, she's a good egg and someone I was keen to ask to contribute to Scanlines. And so, she's here this issue to talk about and showcase one of her geeky passions: DOS Shareware! Over to you, Amy.



In the 90s, one of the most accessible ways to get your hands on more games for your IBM PC was through shareware: free demos distributed on early websites, bulletin board systems, or bundled on magazine cover disks from publications like PC Gamer and Computer Shopper. To a kid with basically no pocket money and limited opportunities to buy big-box PC games, these shareware disks were a goldmine of fantastic new experiences, and I loved my collection of floppies filled with obscure (and some not-so-obscure) treasures! Here's a small selection of some of my favourites.



Invasion of the Mutant Space Bats of Doom! (Pop Software, 1994)

Trapped in deep space, your lone ship is all that stands between Earth and the dreaded Mutant Space Bats of Doom! This colourful Galaga clone has you battle through ever more complicated waves of space bats with a variety of neat power-ups at your disposal and some challenging bonus rounds to break things up. Tricky, but nothing a seasoned shmup player can't handle!



DX-Ball (Michael P. Welch, 1996)

This Breakout-style block buster for Windows 95's newfangled Direct X platform was an homage to Megaball on the Amiga, and it's one of the flashiest examples of the genre. Sick of bopping a ball against blocks over and over? Grab one of the many cool power-ups and EXPLODE those bricks, or blast them with lasers! Later sequels added more and more maps and power-ups to play with but the original still holds its own.



Jill of the Jungle (Epic MegaGames, 1992)

Traditional platform games weren't a popular genre on PC, being thought of as the preserve of consoles and other less-serious microcomputers. Jill of the Jungle, created by Tim Sweeney, aimed to challenge two stereotypes – a PC platformer, starring a heroic warrior woman, in a genre dominated by hedgehogs and plumbers. Jill runs, jumps and throws knives to get past traps and creepy-crawlies in caves and forests, and save the prince – although she wouldn't do that until the third game in the series, titled (appropriately) Jill Saves the Prince!

You can get your hands on all of these fairly easily today, either via backups of the original shareware disks on archive.org or – in the case of Jill and DX-Ball – from storefronts like GOG and Steam. They're all worth a look, and some of them might well addict you!

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GAMING MEMORIES: Ps1 in Poland

Hello again everybody, Sasha's partner here, Kit, here to thank all who read the previous issue of the 'zine and also those joining us now – I really appreciate all the kind words and comments from the ones who read my little article especially, it's very sweet to be able to share my memories with you all like this!

At the end of the last article I mentioned I'd share how it is I got to play the PS1 as a kiddo in spite of not having one, so here it is – while not exactly a glamorous tale, I can imagine a lot of people may have a similar memory so hopefully it awakens some pleasant nostalgia!

Because of money not being too plentiful the only console I had in my early childhood was the high-soaring Pegasus, courtesy of a sweet gift from my grandma – however this wasn't the case for every family in our block, and one day the kiddos upstairs whom I frequently played outside with got themselves a used PS1 to share between all 8(!) of them. As you can imagine, this led to many disputes as to exactly who got to use it when but on the lucky days my best bud at the time had their turn with it, they would always come down to our place to plug it into the TV to jam out!

They only had one controller and no memory card, possibly kept away by the older siblings, but this made the single game we tried playing over and over all the more memorable and burned into memory, being too dummy to actually write down any passwords correctly – said game being Rayman and its wonderful cartoonish style and cheerful tunes!



Playing it once every week, the first stages over and over again, each time inching a little bit further, well... We still never made it very far! Passing the pad to one another after each death and only getting to play it for a few hours meant we never got really good at it – I remember Rayman being one of the first games I fired up with Sasha once she picked up a PS1 again and being surprised at just how easy this insurmountable challenge in my memory proved to be, getting to the dreaded music stage, Band Land, and just... blowing through it like it was nothing?

Eventually as we got older my bud and I stopped meeting for these PS1 sessions, the shiny new PC taking its place on the podium of wonder for endless hot seat sessions of a certain mysterious game I may yet talk about in the future, but it will ever remain a very tender and warm spot in my memory!

Thank you for your time reading this, and I hope that it makes you think of some treasured times of childhood gaming of your own!

PIXEL GALLERY ++ PIXEL GALLERY ++ PIXEL GALLERY



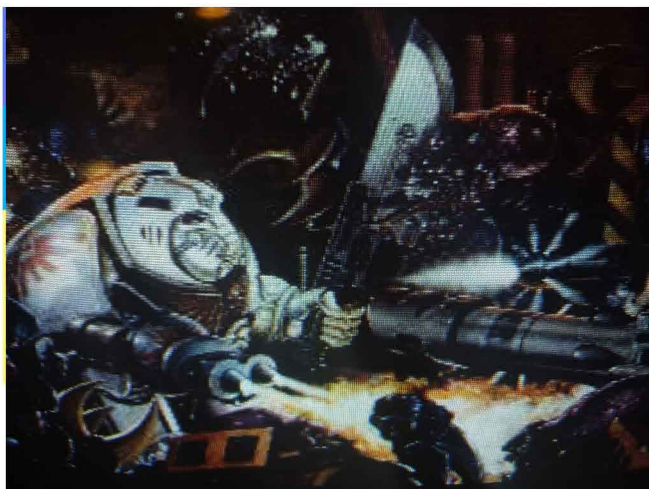
Hi! It's me again, Leeza, the hero of the PSX game Crime Crackers. And I'm here to share some more totally AWESOME stuff with you! Here we go with some cool screenies!



Guardian Heroes, Saturn

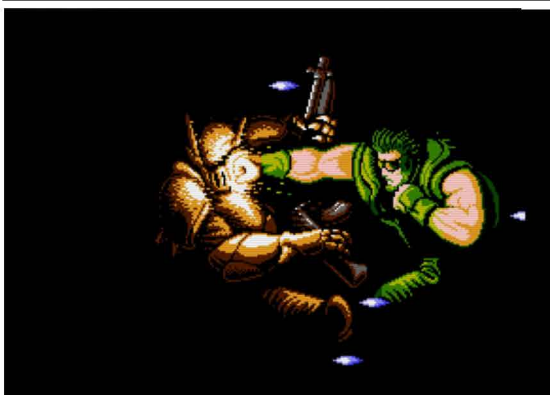


Star Trek: The Rebel Universe (C64)



Space Hulk: Vengeance of the Blood Angels (3DO, PS1, Saturn, and DOS)

Shatterhand (NES) left and Bucky O'Hare (NES) right



These are two of my Favourite NES games! Shatterhand is a TOTALLY RADICAL action game while Bucky O'Hare has some of the BEST graphics on NES and a totally fair continue system!

QUIZ ZONE 2000

Answers to Issue One's Questions:

- (1) First video game played in space? Tetris!
- (2) Guilty Spark is from...? Halo!
- (3) Mario Kart shell that targets first place? Blue!
- (4) Pac-Man ghost that doesn't rhyme? Clyde!
- (5) Urban infrastructure sim by Will Wright? Sim City!

And For this issue's Quiz Questions...

- 1) Which Nintendo villain is nicknamed King Koopa?
- 2) What element pokemon is Pikachu?
- 3) What is the name of the protagonist in Gears of War 1-3?
- 4) In Elder Scrolls, what is the name of the continent where the games takes place?
- 5) What fictional language is spoken by the sims in The Sims?

Answers will be given next issue, good luck!

And thank you for reading <3

